SPAWN
THE DARK AGES
24
DIGITAL EDITION
SPAWN.COM

TODD McFARLANE AND IMAGE COMICS PRESENT

BLEED, PAGAN, BLEED

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LETTERING RICHARD STARKINGS
AND COMICRAFT'S
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SUMMARY

Raven is a young woman envious of her brother's ability to go off to war. She decides to leave her family rather than fulfill her father's wish of getting married and having babies. Raven's quest is to find and defeat the Beast of the Wood. Elsewhere, Covenant encounters a sorcerer named Dumas. And while Gareth attends to the funeral of his friend Makus, he is attacked by Christians of the order of Bishop Gaston Gui seeking the Necroplasm.

TODD McFARLANE PRODUCTIONS

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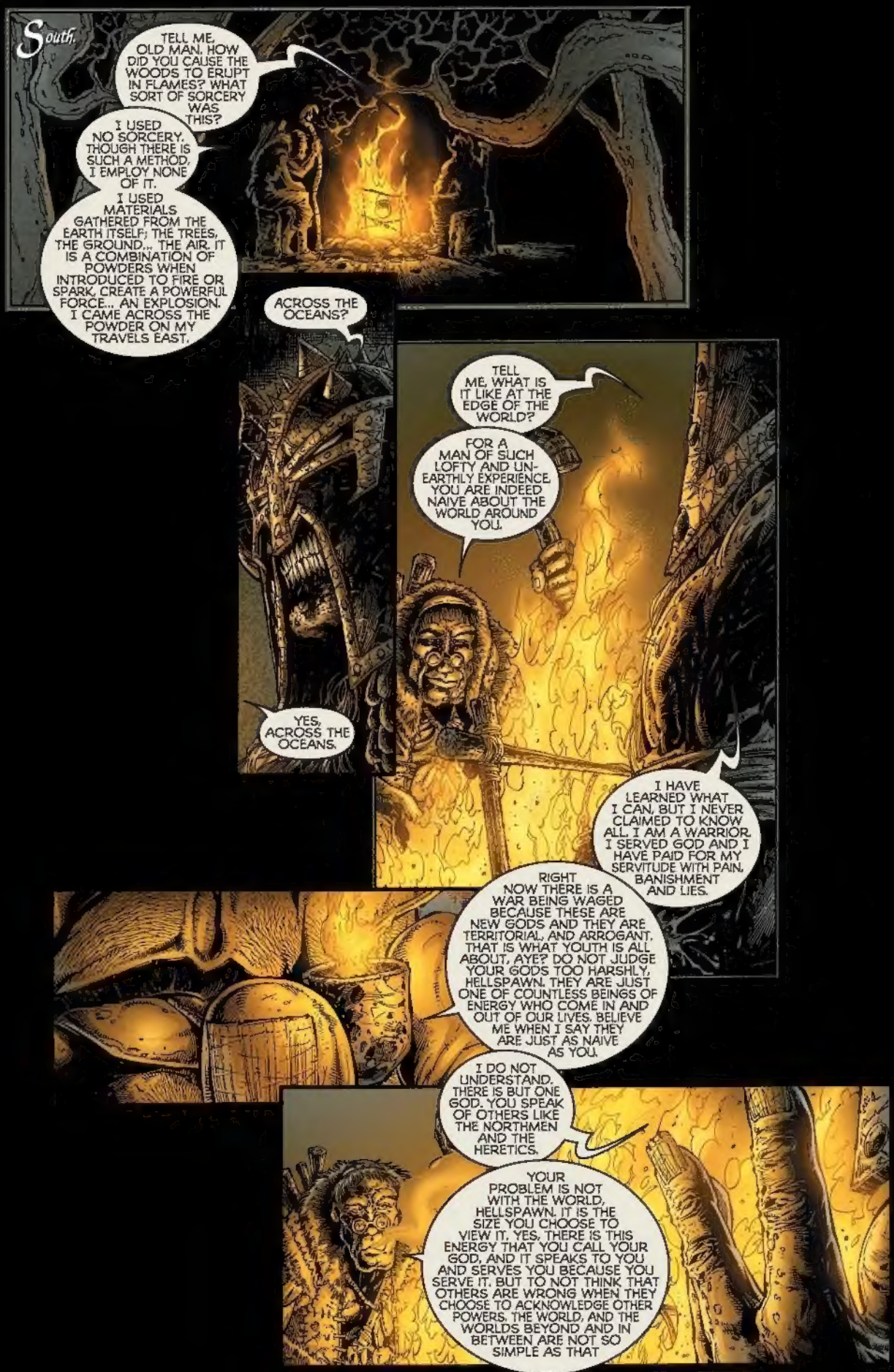
DEATH... I WELCOME THEE...
FORGIVE ME DEATH... I HAVE NOT FULFILLED THAT WHICH I SET OUT TO ACCOMPLISH ON THIS EARTH... IN THIS LIFE...
...I FEAR GREAT MOTHER OF DARKNESS... I HAVE SERVED THE POWERS MORE THAN IMPEDED THEM...
...DEATH... I WELCOME THEE... BUT I BEG FOR ANOTHER DAY'S BREATH TO SNUFF THE EVIL THAT I HAVE UNLEASHED...
I DO NOT KNOW WHAT THEY PLAN- THESE MEN OF THE SINGLE GOD... BUT THEY ARE DESPERATE, ANGRY MEN... AND I FEAR THE WORST...
...FOR THE WORLD...FOR THE OLD GODS... FOR THE PEOPLE AND THE LOST SOULS THAT WILL BE CONSUMED BY THIS FABRICATED WAR OF THE SPIRITS...
...I BEG OF YOU DEATH... TAKE ME NOT ON THIS DAY... AND I WILL FIND THE HELLSPAWN...
...I WILL BEG FORGIVENESS FOR THE WRONG I DID IN THE NAME OF THE MANY GODS... AND I WILL ASK THIS HELLSPAWN TO AID ME...
...I DESERVE THIS DEATH... I HAVE ACTED AS SELFISHLY... I BEG OF YOU BROTHER DEATH...
...ALLOW ME THE STRENGTH TO LIVE ANOTHER DAY AND I WILL RIGHT MY WRONG... I WILL REUNITE THE HELLSPAWN WITH HIS EVIL ESSENCE AND ALLOW MOTHER FATE TO LET THE STORY UNFOLD AS IT WILL...
...ALLOW ME THIS BEFORE I DIE...

DEATH?
I AM NOT DEATH.
I AM RAVEN GREAGER. I AM TRAVELING SOUTH IN SEARCH OF A BEAST THAT HAS WIPED OUT WHOLE TOWNS, AND CONSUMED THEM IN ITS JAWS.
...HELP ME..
...I KNOW OF THIS BEAST... HELP ME AND...
Shhh... REST. TODAY IS NOT THE DAY YOU WILL DIE.
T... THANK YOU MY CHILD.


South.
TELL ME, OLD MAN. HOW DID YOU CAUSE THE WOODS TO ERUPT IN FLAMES? WHAT SORT OF SORCERY WAS THIS?
I USED NO SORCERY. THOUGH THERE IS SUCH A METHOD, I EMPLOY NONE OF IT.
I USED MATERIALS GATHERED FROM THE EARTH ITSELF; THE TREES, THE GROUND... THE AIR. IT IS A COMBINATION OF POWDERS WHEN INTRODUCED TO FIRE OR SPARK, CREATE A POWERFUL FORCE... AN EXPLOSION. I CAME ACROSS THE POWDER ON MY TRAVELS EAST.
ACROSS THE OCEANS?
YES, ACROSS THE OCEANS.
TELL ME, WHAT IS IT LIKE AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD?
FOR A MAN OF SUCH LOFTY AND UN-EARTHLY EXPERIENCE, YOU ARE INDEED NAIVE ABOUT THE WORLD AROUND YOU.
I HAVE LEARNED WHAT I CAN, BUT I NEVER CLAIMED TO KNOW ALL. I AM A WARRIOR. I SERVED GOD AND I HAVE PAID FOR MY SERVITUDE WITH PAIN, BANISHMENT AND LIES.
RIGHT NOW THERE IS A WAR BEING WAGED BECAUSE THESE ARE NEW GODS AND THEY ARE TERRITORIAL, AND ARROGANT. THAT IS WHAT YOUTH IS ALL ABOUT, AYE? DO NOT JUDGE YOUR GODS TOO HARSHLY, HELLSPAWN. THEY ARE JUST ONE OF COUNTLESS BEINGS OF ENERGY WHO COME IN AND OUT OF OUR LIVES. BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY THEY ARE JUST AS NAIVE AS YOU.
I DO NOT UNDERSTAND. THERE IS BUT ONE GOD. YOU SPEAK OF OTHERS LIKE THE NORTHMEN AND THE HERETICS.
YOUR PROBLEM IS NOT WITH THE WORLD, HELLSPAWN. IT IS THE SIZE YOU CHOOSE TO VIEW IT. YES, THERE IS THIS ENERGY THAT YOU CALL YOUR GOD, AND IT SPEAKS TO YOU AND SERVES YOU BECAUSE YOU SERVE IT. BUT TO NOT THINK THAT OTHERS ARE WRONG WHEN THEY CHOOSE TO ACKNOWLEDGE OTHER POWERS. THE WORLD, AND THE WORLDS BEYOND AND IN BETWEEN ARE NOT SO SIMPLE AS THAT

THE WORLD IS WHAT I MAKE IT. I HAVE HEARD THIS LESSON BEFORE, FROM ANOTHER WHO CLAIMED TO UNDERSTAND THE UNIVERSE. THEN WHY DO I NOT SEE THE OTHER POWERS. WHY AM I STUCK IN THIS WAR?
BELIEF IS A HARD SHELL TO BREAK. CHANGE WOULD BE DIFFICULT.
WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IF I TOLD YOU THAT WITHIN THIS STONE WAS ANOTHER WORLD, AND WITHIN THAT ONE YET ANOTHER, EACH UNIVERSE WITH ITS OWN SYSTEM AND A SET OF GODS?
I WOULD SAY YOU SPEAK LIKE A MAN WHO POSSESSES A DISEASED BRAIN.

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HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! YES, I CAN SEE WHERE THAT WOULD BE TRUE!
THANK YOU, MY FRIEND. IT HAS BEEN MANY A DAY SINCE I LAUGHED AS HARD AS THIS... THAT WOUND ON YOUR SHOULDER. DOES IT ACHE LIKE AN INCH?
I HADN'T NOTICED. I AM NOT AS RESISTANT AS I ONCE WAS.
TAKE THIS SALVE AND RUB IT ON THE INFECTED WOUND. IT IS AN EXTRACT FROM A HEALING PLANT.
IT RELIEVES THE ACHE. I THANK YOU.
YOU SEEM IN PAIN YOURSELF. WHY DO YOU NOT USE ONE OF YOUR POWDERS FOR YOURSELF?
I HAVE TRIED... BUT I AM FIGHTING MY OWN BODY. IT IS MY SIZE, YOU SEE. MY BONES ARE COLLAPSING, MY SPINE BENDS AND MY RIBS ARE BEING SLOWLY FORCED OPEN. SAVE LAYING DOWN FOR THE REST OF MY DAYS, THERE IS LITTLE THAT CAN BE DONE.
THEN YOU WILL DIE?

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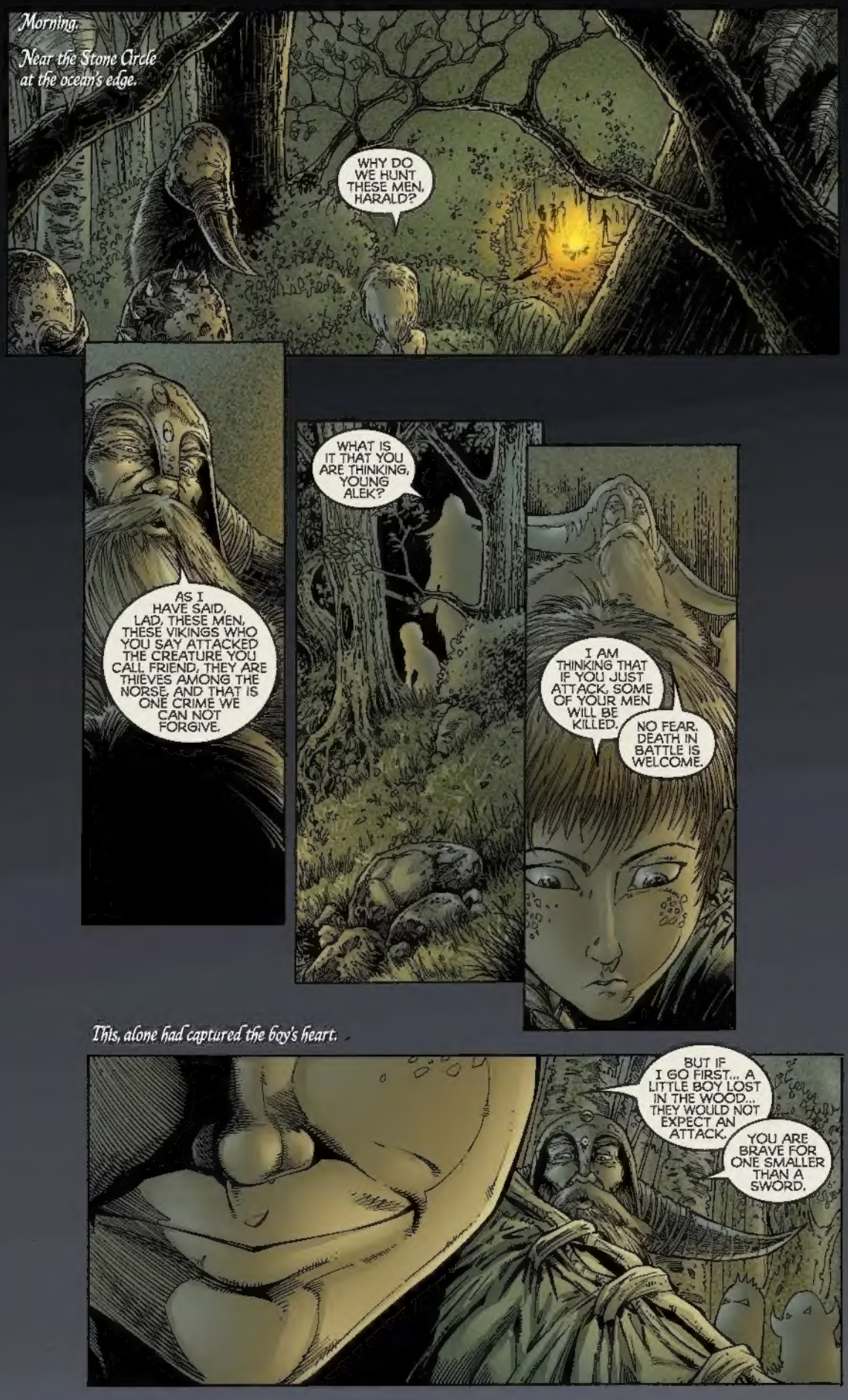
YES, PROBABLY SOON.
PERHAPS THAT IS WHY I CHOSE TO SHOW MYSELF TO YOU. IT HAS BEEN MANY YEARS SINCE I'VE SPOKEN WITH ANOTHER. I THINK PERHAPS I WISHED TO PASS ON SOME AMOUNT OF WHAT I HAVE LEARNED. WOULD YOU CARE TO LEARN SOME OF MY SECRETS?
WHY ME?
THERE ARE ONLY TWO TYPES OF PEOPLE WHOM I FULLY TRUST IN THIS WORLD... THE UNBORN AND THE DEAD... YOU SEEM TO FALL UNDER THE LATTER.
I AM INTERESTED IN THE POWDER THAT EXPLODES.
I THOUGHT YOU WOULD BE.
I AM SORRY FOR YOUR ILLNESS.
IT IS JUST ANOTHER CHAPTER. I LOOK FORWARD TO MY ADVENTURES BEYOND.
WHEN YOU DIE, WHICH OF YOUR GODS WILL YOU GO TO?
WHICHEVER WILL HAVE ME, I SUPPOSE.

WHICHEVER WILL HAVE ME.


Morning.
Near the Stone Circle at the ocean's edge.
WHY DO WE HUNT THESE MEN, HARALD?
AS I HAVE SAID, LAD, THESE MEN, THESE VIKINGS WHO YOU SAY ATTACKED THE CREATURE YOU CALL FRIEND, THEY ARE THIEVES AMONG THE NORSE, AND THAT IS ONE CRIME WE CAN NOT FORGIVE.
WHAT IS IT THAT YOU ARE THINKING, YOUNG ALEK?
I AM THINKING THAT IF YOU JUST ATTACK, SOME OF YOUR MEN WILL BE KILLED.
NO FEAR. DEATH IN BATTLE IS WELCOME.
This, alone had captured the boy's heart.
BUT IF I GO FIRST... A LITTLE BOY LOST IN THE WOOD... THEY WOULD NOT EXPECT AN ATTACK.
YOU ARE BRAVE FOR ONE SMALLER THAN A SWORD.

WHEN YOU GIVE THE SIGNAL, WE WILL APPEAR.
WHAT IS THE SIGNAL?
THE SIGNAL IS... BLOODSHED
?!

WHAT DO YOU WANT BOY?
I AM LOST CAN YOU HELP ME?
THERE'S NO HELP FOR YOU HERE, BOY
DO YOU HEAR ME, BOY?'
HERRRG!
NOW!

I FREE YOU, BROTHER, FROM THIS LIFE YOU HAVE SOILED!
SO IT ENDS.
NOW WE HEAD BACK, AND WE'LL SEE IF WE COME ACROSS THIS FRIEND OF YOURS.

While blood soaks the earth by the sea, in the north the bleeding has finally ceased.
But fever's deadly fingers have taken hold and now the Druid known as Gareth-thief of the Necroplasm-lies drifting in the ether, somewhere between life and death.
WE HAVE TO FLEE... THEY WILL COME FOR US... T IS FREE... IT IS LOOSE...
Shhhh. REST, MY FRIEND WE ARE N NO DANGER. I HAVE MOVED YOU FAR FROM YOUR HIDING PLACE. WHOEVER DID TH S TO YOU, THEY WILL BE UNABLE TO LOCATE US.
WHO'S THERE?! WHO S SPEAKING TO ME?! SHOW YOURSELF!
SPEAK TO ME DEVIL! I AM SORRY I WAS WRONG TO HAVE INTERFERED N YOUR WAR! I WAS WRONG! I WAS...
...DEVILS...

I HAVE VISIONS! I SEE THE DEVILS!
GARETH! CALM YOURSELF! T IS THE FEVER!
I HAVE SEEN WHAT THEY WIL DO WITH THE EV... THE SAINTS! THE DEVILS!
LIE DOWN YOU OLD FOOL! IT IS THE FEVER THAT BRINGS YOU THESE VISIONS! THEY ARE NOT REAL! LIE DOWN OR SO HELP ME I WILL TIE YOU DOWN.
YOU ARE AS KIND AS YOU ARE LOVELY MY DEAR. I DO NOT DESERVE SUCH LUCK. YOU SEE WHAT YOU DO NOT KNOW IS THAT I TOOK THE DARK FORCE OF A DEVIL INCARNATE. I TOOK THE POWER RIGHT FROM HIS HELLBORN FLESH..
YOUR MOUTH RUNS LIKE A LEAK, OLD MAN.
I TOOK IT AND NOW SOMEONE HAS TAKEN IT FROM ME THE OTHER SIDE... THE RESULTS COULD BE CATACLYSMIC.
TELL ME ABOUT THE BEAST THAT I WILL HUNT AFTER YOU ARE HEALED. WHEN I FOUND YOU, YOU TOLD ME YOU KNEW OF THE BEAST.
HA HA HEEE. THAT IS WHAT I HAVE BEEN TELLING YOU, WOMAN. THE HELLBORN CREATURE THAT I ATTACKED AND THIS BEAST OF THE WOOD... THEY ARE ONE AND THE SAME.
HE S THE BEAST THAT I HUNT?
HE IS AND MORE. THERE IS NO BEAST OF THE WOOD DEAR... IT S LEGEND... A STORY MADE UP BY PEOPLE WHO CANNOT FACE THE TRUTH THAT PEOPLE D E. TH S CREATURE IS A THING BORN OF WHAT THEY ARE CA..NG HELL
IF HE S BORN OF HELL, PAGAN, THEN HE IS TO BE HUNTED.
THAT IS WHAT I THOUGHT WHEN I STRUCK H M DOWN AND REMOVED WHAT GAVE HIM STRENGTH. I WAS WRONG AND SO ARE YOU. HE S A BEAST, YES. BUT HE TOO S A MAN. A PAWN IN A GAME PLAYED BY POMPOUS GODS.

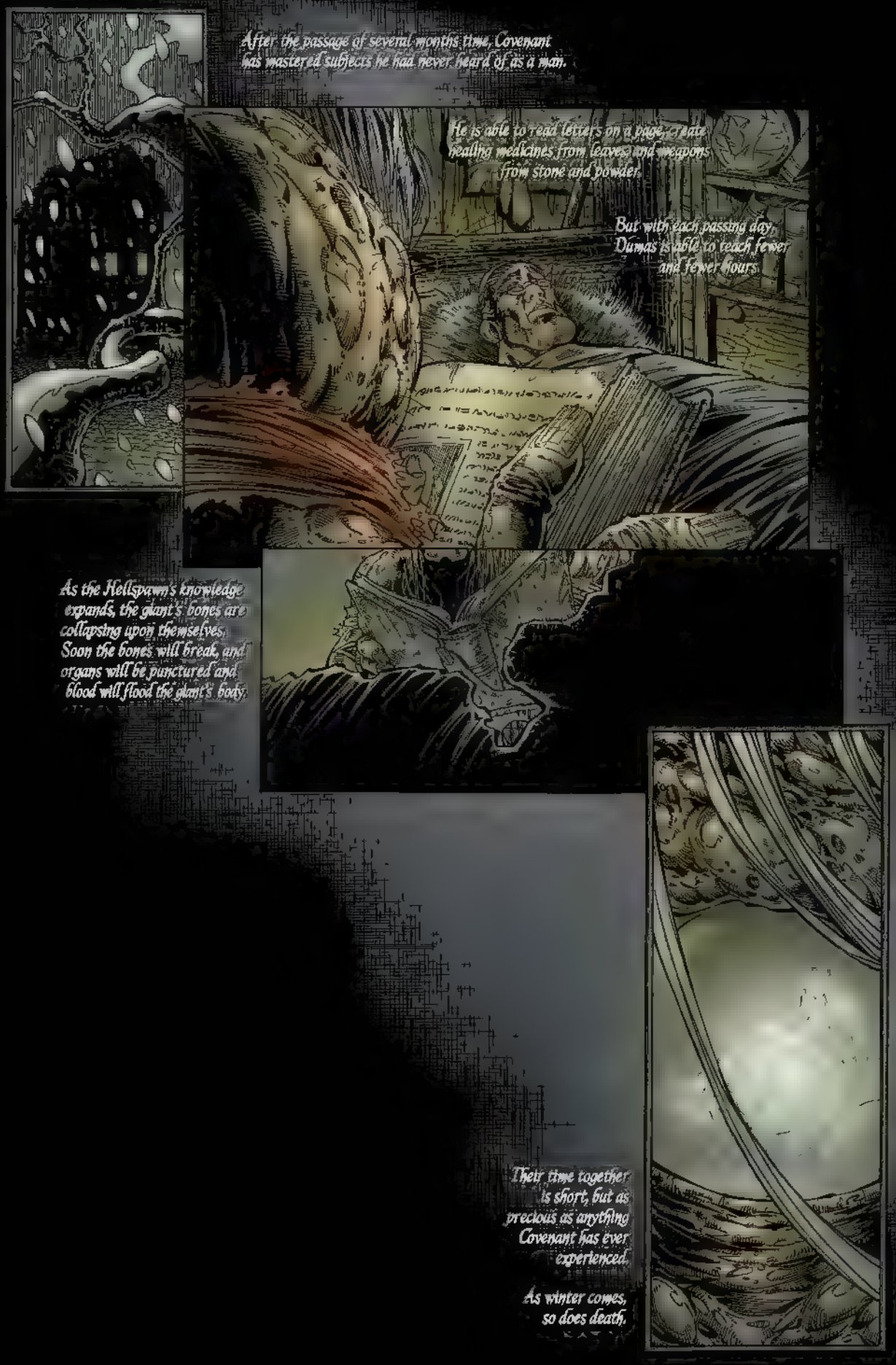
DO NOT HUNT THIS CREATURE FOR PERSONAL GAIN OR SPORT... HELP ME LOCATE HIM FOR I MUST UNDO THE WRONG THAT I HAVE DONE HIM...
I WILL NOT HUNT NOR KILL IF IT DOES NOT BRING ME HONOR. IF THIS BEAST THIS HELL-CREATURE IS WHAT YOU SAY, A PAWN, THEN WE WILL FIND HIM AND SEE WHAT LIES AHEAD.
GOOD. YOU ARE WISE... NOW BEFORE I FADE AGAIN... HELP ME HEAL.
TAKE THE SALVE FROM THE WOUNDS AND PLACE IT WITHIN MY LIPS.
FEED YOU THE MUD AND INFECTION?! I DO NOT --
DO AS I SAY. PLEASE. THESE ARE ANCIENT METHODS... I DO NOT EXPECT YOU TO UNDERSTAND. FEED ME THE EARTH AND MY WOUND... AND I WILL SLEEP.
I PRAISE YOU. I KNOW YOU ARE NEW TO THESE STRANGE WAYS. I KNOW YOU ARE OF THE CHURCH... THANK YOU FOR INDULGING MY DYING WAYS.
YOU WOULD HEAL FASTER IF YOU DID NOT SPEAK SO MUCH.
NOW... I MAY SLEEP FOR A LONG TIME... DO NOT BE ALARMED.

Minutes turn to hours and hours to days and weeks as the Hellspawn listens, learns and absorbs the lessons of the giant, Dumas.
While the world outside fades from his mind, Covenant begins to feel a sensation that he has never felt before. A feeling akin to winning a battle and holding one's sword in conquest.
It is the feeling of the wolf who prey.
Dumas tells tales of lands where people appear and act so different that the stories could be called fantasy.
Civilizations where men are as small as children and their skin the tone of coal. Lands where animals the size of hillsides roam free and others that live on earth frozen solid the year round.

Boundaries, imagined and real, begin to crumble.
And everywhere there are people fighting for their moment to rise. Everywhere there is death and dying, learning and growing.
...changing.
For the first time Covenant welcomes change and all its unique differences.
Today the world grows larger, and it is good.

In the North...
...a sole survivor of an ancient religion awakens from months of fever.
GARETH. GOOD SIR. ARE YOU..?
HOW LONG WAS I GONE?
OVER A HUNDRED NIGHTS. THROUGH THE SEASON'S CHANGE.
WE HAVE LITTLE TIME TO WASTE. I HAVE COST US PRECIOUS TIME. I HAVE SEEN VISIONS OF EVIL. WE MUST FIND THE HELLSPAWN AND TELL HIM WHAT HAS HAPPENED.
QUICKLY GIRL! PEOPLE ARE DYING AS WE SPEAK.

The blood of a beast for the man.
...a refugee peasant boy becomes a Viking warrior in a sea of blood.
The blood of a man for the warrior half.
TODAY YOU ARE A MAN. TODAY YOU ARE ONE OF US. DO YOU ACCEPT US AS YOUR OWN?
YES.


After the passage of several months time, Covenant has mastered subjects he had never heard of as a man.
He is able to read letters on a page, create healing medicines from leaves and weapons from stone and powder.
But with each passing day, Dumas is able to teach fewer and fewer hours.
As the Hellspawn's knowledge expands, the giant's bones are collapsing upon themselves. Soon the bones will break, and organs will be punctured and blood will flood the giant's body.
Their time together is short, but as precious as anything Covenant has ever experienced.
As winter comes, so does death.

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR WHAT YOU HAVE GRANTED ME, DUMAS. YOU ARE A GOOD AND WISE MAN. I AM GRATEFUL TO HAVE MET YOU.
AND I YOU. I HAVE WALKED MANY PATHS IN MY LIFE. BUT YOU ARE THE CLOSEST I HAVE COME TO WALKING WITH THE SPIRIT WORLD. I HAVE MY THEORIES, MY BELIEFS, BUT YOU ARE THE FIRST EVIDENCE THAT TELLS ME THERE IS MORE WAITING BEYOND THIS TROUBLED BODY. I THANK YOU FOR THAT.
WE HAVE TALKED MUCH OF THIS, DUMAS. I AM NEITHER SPIRIT NOR MAN. I DO NOT KNOW WHAT I AM.
COUGH! YOU DISAPPOINT ME, HELLSPAWN. WHAT DOES YOUR HEART TELL YOU?
THAT I AM NEITHER FLESH NOR SPIRIT, BUT SOMETHING IN BETWEEN.
AND THAT MAKES YOU SOMETHING UNNAMED PERHAPS THE FIRST OF YOUR KIND. COUGH! REMEMBER WHEN WE MET. I TOLD YOU THAT YOU HAD A NAME BURIED DEEP WITHIN YOU THAT WAS NOT COVENANT... DO YOU KNOW WHY?
NO.
COVENANT DIED. HIS FLESH TAKEN BY THE EARTH. YOU ARE NOT THIS MAN COVENANT. IT IS A TRICK OF THE POWERS WHO SPAWNED YOU. YOU ARE SPAWN.
SPAWN?
COVENANT IS DEAD. GRIEVE FOR HIM. BUT FREE YOURSELF OF HIM. FORGET WHAT HE WAS, AND WHAT HE DID. FORGET HIS RIGHTS AND WRONGS. THEY DO NOT INVOLVE YOU.
SPAWN.

AND... PLEASE REMEMBER THIS... YOU ARE ONE OF A KIND AS LONG AS YOU LIVE... TRY TO TAKE SMALLER STEPS... AND TRY... NOT TO BE AFRAID.
NOW... IF YOU DON'T MIND... I'D VERY MUCH LIKE... TO DIE.
GOODBYE, SPAWN. I HAVE ENJOYED OUR TIME, THOUGH SHORT IT WAS. YOU ARE WHAT YOU CHOOSE. CHOOSE TO BE A MAN. CHOOSE TO BE GOOD. CHOOSE TO VIEW THE WORLD BEYOND THE PERIMETERS HANDED TO YOU, AND YOU WILL LIVE... TODAY... COUGH!
YOU ARE REBORN.
GOODBYE DUMAS.
Today two men died.
One, a giant named Dumas...
...the other a soldier and warrior named Lord Iath Covenant.
May they both rest in peace.

He did not bury Dumas, as was the giant's wish. Instead, Spawn sealed the doors and windows, converting the shelter into a modest tomb.
Once completed, the Hellspawn set out with a purpose. There were people to find, amends to make, lands to reclaim.
From the wood, Spawn emerges a new being, not man, not beast, but something else, something extraordinary.
Around his waist he wears the belt of Dumas, but his greatest tools... beat inside him, awakened.
They are his heart and his mind.
They are united.
Long live Spawn.

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